

Message Text

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TAGS: SNAR, TH

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS DISCUSSIONS WITH AIR MARSHAL SITTHI
SAWETHASILA

REF: BANGKOK 17994

1. ON JUNE 27, WASHINGTON NARCOTICS PRINCIPALS DISCUSSED
THE THAI AND GOLDEN TRIANGLE TRAFFICKING SITUATION WITH
AIR MARSHAL SITTHI. DURING THE MEETING, WHICH WAS CORDIAL
AND FRANK, THE WASHINGTON PARTICIPANTS DREW HEAVILY UPON
THE FINE GUIDANCE CONTAINED IN REFTEL.

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2. WASHINGTON PRINCIPALS COMPLIMENTED THE AIR MARSHAL
ON THE FINE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN BY PRIME
MINISTER KRIANGSAK AND HIS GOVERNMENT. PARTICULAR ATTENTION
WAS GIVEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO
EXPEL THE SHAN UNITED ARMY (SUA) FROM THAI SOIL AND THE
BENEFICIAL EFFECT THAT THIS ACTION IS EXPECTED TO HAVE
UPON THAI-BURMESE COOPERATION. SITTHI REPLIED THAT ALTHOUGH

THEIR BASE HAS BEEN CLOSED DOWN, THE SUA ARE STILL IN THE IMMEDIATE BORDER AREA AND HEAVILY ARMED, COMPLICATING THE RTG TASK. THE RTG REMAINS DETERMINED TO GET THEM ENTIRELY OUT OF THAILAND. THE AIR MARSHAL ALSO NOTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS ATTEMPTING TO REMOVE KEY RTG OFFICIALS WHO

HAVE DEVELOPED TOO CLOSE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SUA, A PROBLEM OF GREAT CONCERN SINCE THE INDIVIDUALS DETERMINE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY. THE WASHINGTON PRINCIPALS EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION FOR THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN EXPELLING THE SUA, PARTICULARLY IN THE FACE OF RTG PROBLEMS WITH INSURGENCIES IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH AS WELL AS WITH ITS CAMBODIAN NEIGHBORS.

3. REFERRING TO HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK AND GENERAL PHAO SARASIN, AIR MARSHAL SITTHI

OBSERVED THAT THE NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD COULD WELL UTILIZE ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT. NOTING THAT THE NCB CURRENTLY HAS A SHORTAGE OF GOOD QUALIFIED PEOPLE, SITTHI SAID THAT IT INTENDS TO ACQUIRE AN ADDITIONAL 500 MEN FOR ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS. THESE MEN WOULD REQUIRE NARCOTICS RELATED TRAINING, VEHICLES, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, LABORATORY EQUIPMENT, AND FOUR ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS. HE STATED THAT THE PM ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO STRENGTHENING THE NCB IN THIS MANNER.

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4. REPLYING TO THE HELICOPTER REQUEST, SENIOR ADVISER FALCO NOTED THE CLOSE CONGRESSIONAL SCRUTINY TO WHICH ALL INC AIRCRAFT REQUESTS ARE BEING SUBJECTED AND THE NEW CONGRESSIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR STRICT END-USE REPORTING OF ALL INC SUPPLIED COMMODITIES. AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PROVIDING ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS AT THIS TIME, FALCO SUGGESTED THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL CONTAINED IN PARA 6 OF REFTEL. SHE STRESSED THAT THIS ALTERNATIVE APPROACH WOULD ALLOW US TO ASSESS MORE FULLY RTG NARCOTICS AIRCRAFT REQUIREMENTS, AFTER PERHAPS A YEAR'S TRIAL, AND ALLOW US TO EVALUATE FULLY ANY REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT SINCE THE EXISTING ONES SHOULD THEN BE OPERATING AT FULL CAPACITY. DR. BOURNE ENDORSED THIS APPROACH.

5. NOTING THAT HE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED SUCH AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL WITH GENERAL PHAO, THE AIR MARSHAL STATED THAT OUR COUNTERPROPOSAL WAS REASONABLE AND ACCEPTABLE. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD TOLD GENERAL PHAO OF THE NEED TO PAY CLOSER ATTENTION TO ENSURE THAT INC-PROVIDED HELICOPTERS WERE USED FOR NARCOTICS PURPOSES. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE BASIC PROBLEM WITH MAINTENANCE OF THE

POLICE AVIATION DIVISION HELICOPTERS WAS THE POOR QUALITY OF WORK PERFORMED BY THAI-AM. IF THE AMERICANS WERE WILLING TO FUND THE MAINTENANCE ON A ONE-TIME BASIS TO PROVIDE THE SPARES AND MAINTENANCE TO GET GROUNDED AIRCRAFT OPERATIONAL AGAIN, GENERAL PHAO WOULD BE ABLE TO USE THAI MONEY EARMARKED FOR THAT PURPOSE TO DEFRAY COSTS RELATED

TO AN INCREASE IN ANTI-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS. SITTHI WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT PLEASED WITH THAI-AM AND INDICATED THAT HE HAD NO PREFERENCE AS TO WHICH FIRM IN THAILAND (OR APPARENTLY ELSEWHERE) DID THE REPAIR WORK. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE USG FIND A BETTER FIRM IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEW MAINTENANCE PROGRAM.

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6. ON THIS POINT, THE EMBASSY MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES IN DETERMINING THE BEST WAY TO MAKE THE NEEDED REPAIRS. ONE WAY WOULD BE TO HAVE MAINTENANCE PERFORMED BY A COMPANY OTHER THAN THAI-AM WHICH IS LOCATED IN OR COULD LOCATE A FACILITY IN OR NEAR CHIANG MAI. ANOTHER SOLUTION, PERHAPS WITH MORE LONG-RANGE BENEFIT, WHICH THE EMBASSY MAY WISH TO EXPLORE WOULD BE TO USE INC FUNDS TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE REPAIR FACILITY FOR INC-PROVIDED AIRCRAFT. SUCH A FACILITY, PREFERABLY LOCATED IN CHIANG MAI TO ENCOURAGE USE OF THE HELICOPTERS IN THE PRIME NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AREAS, COULD ESTABLISH ITS OWN SPARE PARTS PIPELINE DIRECTLY WITH HELIO ORIENT OR SOME OTHER REPUTABLE SUPPLIER. THE DEPARTMENT WOULD ALSO BE WILLING TO DEFRAY COSTS INVOLVED WITH FACILITY PROCUREMENT AND SALARIES OF AVIATION MECHANICS FOR THIS SPECIAL FACILITY. WE SUGGEST THAT THE EMBASSY MIGHT WISH TO DRAW UPON THE EXPERTISE OF RUDY HALL, AVIATION SPECIALIST ASSIGNED TO RANGOON.

7. ON THE SUBJECT OF CROP SUBSTITUTION, SITTHI SEEMED FULLY APPRISED OF THE STATUS OF THE MAE CHAEM PROJECT RECOUNTED IN PARA 10 OF REFTEL. HE URGED THAT THE FIRST PHASE GET UNDERWAY SOONEST GIVEN THE PM'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THIS PROJECT. THE WASHINGTON PRINCIPALS, DRAWING UPON PARA 11 OF REFTEL, STRESSED THE NEED FOR FULL COOPERATION AND COORDINATION AMONG ALL RTG AGENCIES IN THE CROP SUBSTITUTION EFFORT. THE AIR MARSHAL RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR THIS COOPERATION AND STRESSED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD USE HIS PERSONAL INFLUENCE TO ENSURE THAT IT TAKES PLACE.

8. ON ANOTHER TOPIC, SITTHI NOTED THAT KRIANGSAK HAS INSTRUCTED POLICE OFFICIALS TO DETERMINE MEANS OF KEEPING
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ACETIC ANHYDRIDE OUT OF NORTHERN THAILAND. ACCORDING TO THE AIR MARSHAL, A LAW IS PRESENTLY BEING DRAFTED TO KEEP THAT CHEMICAL AS WELL AS OTHERS USED IN NARCOTICS MANUFACTURE OUT OF THE NORTH.

9. SITTHI ALSO REPORTED THAT PHAO HAD ASKED THE CHINESE DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO PEKING TO PROVIDE

INFORMATION WHICH COULD BE PASSED TO HONG KONG AUTHORITIES ON BOATS CONTAINING NARCOTICS SEIZED IN PRC TERRITORIAL WATERS. THE CHINESE APPARENTLY DO NOT DETAIN EITHER THE CREWS OR THE BOATS, NOR DO THEY CONFISCATE THE NARCOTICS. VANCE

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